

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Colt's Manufacturing Company Inc

#### Connecticut State Technology Extension Program

#### Colt Manufacturing Applies Higher Quality Standard To Special Forces Rifles

##### Client Profile:

Colt Manufacturing Company, Inc. is a 165 year-old manufacturer of firearms weapons currently being used by special U.S. military forces in Afghanistan. Located in Hartford, Connecticut, the company currently employs 500 people.

##### Situation:

Approximately 75 percent of Colt's products are sold to the U.S. military and U.S. law enforcement agencies, as well as to military and law enforcement forces of U.S. State Department-approved friendly countries around the world. In addition to setting its own quality expectations, the government recently mandated ISO registration from all its top suppliers. To retain this portion of its business, Colt needed to achieve ISO certification for its M4 and M16 rifle lines. Two early attempts at passing the certification audit failed. Once the company's new President and Chief Executive Officer, Lieutenant General William M. Keys, committed to the effort in May 2000 and secured the cooperation of its employees, Colt enlisted the help of the Connecticut State Technology Extension Program (CONNSTEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate.

##### Solution:

At CONNSTEP's recommendation, Colt formed a steering committee consisting of representatives from each of the company's functional areas, including management and its union (UAW Local No. 376). After securing financial assistance from the State Department of Labor for the company to complete the project, CONNSTEP facilitated training for Colt's employees to learn the requirements and procedures for ISO registration.

Long-time union production workers offered no resistance to implementing the ISO procedures. In fact, a number of union workers volunteered to act as internal auditors for the process. As a military supplier, Colt is accustomed to meeting government standards; ISO did not present a serious challenge because government and ISO standards share certain similarities. Many of Colt's employees have military backgrounds, and their work appeals to a higher sense of duty. Upholding the very highest quality standards resonates on a personal level.

CONNSTEP guided the company through the extensive implementation of new policies, processes, and procedures necessary for ISO certification. CONNSTEP also helped Colt document its new quality program, another critical component of ISO.

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The company achieved ISO 9001:2000 certification in September 2001. The certification has been reviewed and approved by the government, and the men and women of the military will continue to carry and rely upon Colt's products.

### **Results:**

Achieved ISO 9001:2000 certification.

Received corroboration of standards from the U.S. government.

Secured grant funding from the U.S. Department of Labor to finance project.

Retained all U.S. government contracts.

### **Testimonial:**

"It's one thing when the customer says 'we want you to go ISO,' but we've got a higher calling, frankly, than that. People's lives depend upon these rifles being made properly. Thanks to the Connecticut State Technology Extension Program, we can reassure them of the quality of our product."

Charles Lynn Lowder, Chief Operating Officer